Discipline vs. Punishment

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Course Goals

We expect to help participants:

- Distinguish difference between discipline and punishment
- Discover the connections among anger, violence, discipline and punishment
- Appreciate underlying beliefs of adults who discipline children
- Appreciate the sensitive nature of subject
- Define discipline
- Consider value the historical perspective of the treatment of children with regard to violence, child abuse, discipline and punishment
- Learn techniques of constructive discipline
- Discern the difference between disciplinary consequences and punishing consequences
- Differentiate between incentives, rewards and bribes
Discipline vs. Punishment

- Discipline and punishment are not synonymous.
- Healthy and effective discipline involves establishing and maintaining fair and reasonable rules, boundaries and expectations.
- Effective discipline “disciples” or guides children.
- It provides safety and structure while teaching children ways to be respectful and responsible.
- It is done in respectful and responsible ways.
- When adults discipline in effective ways it does not produce toxic shame because a child’s dignity is maintained.
Discipline vs. Punishment

- Punishment is a deliberate infliction of pain that is imposed to force a person to submit, comply, defer, and/or experience humiliation.
- The hope is typically that the fear of punishment motivates people to avoid behaviors for which they will be punished.
Connecting Anger and Violence with Discipline and Punishment

- We encourage educators to appreciate the potential connection among violence, discipline and punishment.
- We invite educators to differentiate among these subjects.
- We encourage an appreciation that there is no place for violence when it comes to effective discipline.
- Punishment often involves some degree of violence that is verbal and/or physical.
Underlying Beliefs

- Sometimes adults do not make a distinction among violence, discipline and punishment.
- Violence has been part of our society and many communities and families.
- It is unrealistic to expect to easily and willingly accept the research that documents some of these connections and that any form of violence in discipline can have unhealthy and destructive long-term effects.
- We believe in addressing and intentionally working to change inaccurate and unhealthy attitudes and beliefs in order to promote healthy, acceptable behavior toward children.
Appreciations

- Educators need to appreciate the sensitive nature of the subject
- We need to appreciate that we are jumping in “Midstream”
Predictions, Acknowledgments and Disclaimers

- Educators come with a variety of experiences, trainings, needs, perspectives, values and goals.
- Information on the subjects of violence, violence prevention and effective discipline is extensive and complex.
- We can only focus on a small percentage of this information.
- We approach training with a deep level of respect for the experience and knowledge of each participant.
Definition of Discipline

- According to Webster’s 3rd International Dictionary:
  
  a. “Training or experience that corrects, molds, strengthens or perfects.”
  b. “Education” is listed as a synonym.

“Discipline” comes from the Latin root which means “disciple” or follower of a teacher. Generally we don’t think of a disciple following a teacher out of fear of punishment, but rather from respect for the teacher and from inner convictions.
Historical Perspective

- As late as the early 1900s, animals had more rights than children in America. Children were not considered to have value and were treated as miniature adults.

- The European-American culture began with an Authoritarian, rigid, punitive approach that did not consider the needs of the child or the developmental stages and tasks of the child.

- By the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s an overly permissive approach evolved which denied the needs of parents and allowed them to escape responsibility for assuming the role of authority figure.
Historical Perspective

- Children were often overindulged and pampered as parents neglected their duties of providing structure.
- It became clear this approach was not producing children of character.
- The pendulum seemed to swing back encouraging parents to assume the roles of disciplinarian and authority while still maintaining the gains made in understanding children’s needs and rights to emotional health.
- Today’s experts advocate a moderate, balanced approach that blends nurture and structure.
Why Punishment is Discouraged

Research shows:

- Punishment is less effective in stopping children from misbehaving.
- Children who are frequently punished are less emotionally healthy, self-confident, self-caring and do not do as well in life as children who are not subjected to punishment.
- Punishment means imposing pain, loss or suffering and is often unrelated to child’s behavior.
- Punishment often serves as a distraction.
Constructive Discipline

- Considers behavioral, emotional and relational aspects of child
- Sees children’s needs as important
- Sees parents needs as important
- Trusts children’s capacity for reasonable cooperation that can develop over time
- Respects power, gradually transferring from parent to child
- Promotes emotional health of every family member
- Promotes integrity of parent/child relationship
- Helps child develop inner core of control promoting self-discipline, self-confidence, respect for self and others and sense of responsibility
Disciplining and Boundaries

- One approach to effective discipline is setting and enforcing healthy boundaries.
- Cloud and Townsend in *Boundaries with Kids* see setting and enforcing healthy boundaries as a process that allows a child to take external rules, limits and consequences and make them internal.
- Children develop several qualities if boundaries are clear:
  ~ Well-defined sense of who they are
  ~ Well-defined sense of what they are responsible for
  ~ Ability to choose
  ~ Understanding that if they choose well, things go well
  ~ Possibility for true love based in freedom
Disciplining and Boundaries

- “The essence of boundaries is self-control, responsibility, freedom and love.”
- Authors encourage parents to treat boundaries in an almost clinical way, maintaining a high degree of calmness and not taking children’s behavior as personal.
- Parents who apply these principles are loving and forgiving but not caught up in emotional power struggles.
- Authors encourage connecting character development with effective discipline.
- As parents become effective in disciplining, they simultaneously promote strong, healthy character traits in children.
Character

A person of character may have the following qualities:

- Loving
- Responsible
- Claims appropriate freedom
- Able to initiate
- Respectful of realities
- Able to grow, recover, confess, change behavior, forgive, take ownership of a problem
- Oriented to truth and trustworthiness
- Able to handle power appropriately
- Able to be thankful, appreciative
- Able to set boundaries with self and others
- Courageous
Discipline and Limit Setting

- Limit setting is used when a child is incapable of being responsible.
- Limit setting is an imposed structure.
- The child is not expected to have self-control, the authority provides necessary control.
- Limit setting involves an adult providing outward boundaries when a child is not yet mature enough to understand, self-control or respond to directions.
- Most children need limit setting alone until they are around 3 years old.
Discipline and Limit Setting

- Discipline involves an attempt to teach.
- The assumption is that the child is capable of understanding the expected behavior.
- Both limit setting and discipline have their place in the whole process of effective discipline.
Types of Consequences

- A consequence is the response or reaction that occurs as a result of some action or behavior.

- Consequences can be:
  - Naturally occurring
  - Imposed by an outside force
  - More or less effective
  - More or less emotionally healthy
  - More or less relationally healthy
  - More or less reality based
  - More positive, pleasant, satisfying and affirming
  - More neutral and relatively inconsequential
  - More instructional
  - More negative, unpleasant, restrictive, painful
  - More disciplinary versus punishing
  - More punishing than disciplinary
Consequences

- Disciplinary consequences and punishing consequences are different.
- The intention behind disciplinary consequences is to teach, encourage, motivate or impose restrictions to limit potentially harmful behaviors.
- The intention behind punishing consequences is to inflict pain, humiliation or to get even.
- Disciplinary consequences can be natural or imposed.
Natural Consequences

- A natural consequence is something that happens naturally as a result of some action (or lack of action).
- A natural consequence does not take any decision or effort for it to happen.
- Example of positive natural consequence: Child wears a coat on a cold day and feels warm and comfortable.
- Example of negative natural consequence: Child does not wear a coat on a cold day and gets chilled.
Imposed Consequences

- Imposed consequence is also something that happens as a direct result of action (or inaction), but someone must do something to make it happen.

- Imposed consequences should be logical and related to behavior and what is being taught.

- Example of affirming imposed disciplinary consequence: Teen asks for permission to drive car and is responsible. Parents give a set of keys and tell him he can take the car without asking for certain occasions as long as a note is left saying where he is going and when he will be home.
Imposed Consequences

- Example of imposed disciplinary consequence: Teenager drives family car without leaving a note. As a result, he is restricted from using the car for anything but school-related activities until he comes up with a clear plan of how he will be sure this does not happen again.

- Example of imposed punishing consequence: Teenager drives family car without leaving a note. Parents scream and yell, calling him an irresponsible idiot. They threaten to tear up his license. Finally settle on taking away all privileges for one month and constantly remind him of how upset they are.
Reality versus Relational

- Authors Cloud and Townsend in *Boundaries with Kids* suggest that adults “differentiate between reality consequences, which are what healthy natural and imposed consequences are, and relational consequences, which use psychological pressures, such as anger, guilt used manipulatively by a parent or caregiver, withdrawing love or nagging.”

- It is recommended that adults primarily use reality consequences.
Reality versus Relational

- “Consequences transfer the need to be responsible from the parent/adult to the child. Consequences make it the child’s problem.”
- The goal is not to control the children to make them do what you want.
- “The goal is to give them the choice to do what they want, and make it so painful (not meaning corporal punishment) to do the wrong thing that they will not want to.”
- Effective consequences should never be about a loss of love or emotional connection.
Reality versus Relational

- While this approach is helpful, there may be times when the reality is that a behavior is having a relational impact.
- Certain behaviors impact our sense of trust, safety, fairness and connection in a relationship.
- Informing a child of this impact and expecting the child to somehow take responsibility for that can be appropriate and healthy.
- Teaching children about the components of relationships and how to heal wounds by apologizing and making amends can be an important component of effective discipline.
Healthy Consequences

- To be healthy and effective, consequences should provide one or more of the following:
  
  ~ Safety
  ~ Limits/boundaries
  ~ Teaching
  ~ A way to make Amends

This list can help determine if what is being done is actually a consequence or is more of a punishment. It is important to compliment and affirm a child for accepting and following through on consequences.
Healthy Consequences

- A consequence may feel like a punishment to a child.
- The main difference between a disciplinary consequence and a punishing consequences is the intent.
- We recommend the use of fair and appropriate disciplinary consequences.
- We do not recommend the use of punishment.
- Sometimes NOT giving a formal consequence is a better way to discipline.
- Sometimes asking the child to make changes or figure out for self how to change or make amends is enough.
Bribery, Incentives & Rewards

- A bribe involves an attempt to coerce someone to do something he or she would not ordinarily do.
- Bribery is a manipulation, a way of overpowering another through trickery.
- We do not recommend adults use bribes.
- Elizabeth Crary (*Without Spanking or Spoiling*) differentiates between short-term, intermediate and long-term rewards.
- She indicates a short-term reward is a bribe because it is used to stop negative behavior that just happened.
Bribery, Incentives & Rewards

- The undesirable behavior is stopped temporarily but there is not an increase in desirable behavior.
- A real reward will strengthen desirable behavior over the long term.
- A reward is a token of appreciation, a way to reinforce, a more concrete acknowledgment of an accomplishment.
- An incentive is something that helps a child make an effort to behave in a certain way.
- It encourages and supports versus coerces.
- It is used when the behavior is ultimately beneficial to the child, not because it benefits the adult.
Bribery, Incentives & Rewards

- It isn’t always easy to differentiate between the three.
- Often it is about the underlying motives of the parent and the messages received by the child.
- Basically an incentive encourages desired behaviors while a bribe attempts to trick or manipulate.
- Bribes teach children to look for rewards to stop them from doing something.
- Incentives reinforce desired behaviors.
- Incentives and rewards have a place in healthy parenting.
Power of Reinforcement

- Reinforcement is a child’s strengthened lesson that creates new knowledge, new beliefs.
- Children are reinforced frequently in life by the consequences they experience.
- When something is reinforced, it is believed it is more than a fluke or one-time response.
- Some reinforcements are positive, enjoyable and attractive to a child.
- Some reinforcements are more about avoiding pain, negative, unpleasant experiences.
Threats vs. Information

- A threat is an attempt to overpower a person, to use fear as a way of controlling behavior.
- An explanation provides specific information to prepare a person for the result that will occur if they continue or do not change a behavior.
- The purpose of an explanation is to give the person an opportunity to change the behavior.
- A critical aspect of an effective consequence is the certainty that it will occur.
- We recommend providing information, not the use of threats.
Time Outs

- Time outs have become extremely common in discipline.
- They are often used inappropriately.
- Inappropriate time out is a form of punishment that intends to shame, blame or banish the child.
- Appropriate time out gives parents and children the opportunity to calm down.
- The functions of time out are to interrupt destructive or unacceptable behavior.
- Sometimes it is the adult who needs the time out.
- Sometimes adults and children take time outs together.
Discipline and Moral Development

- In *The Family Virtues Guide* Linda Popov designs an approach to parenting based on universally accepted virtues.
- It is based on the model of the adult as educator.
- Adults are expected to use their power and authority to be teachers focusing on guiding children’s moral growth.
- There is a core belief that a child’s moral growth is linked to how a adult disciplines.
- Discipline based on a virtue helps children internalize the virtues.
Manipulation

- Sometimes adults suspect even very young children of being manipulative when they are acting sad or upset.
- Under the age of 5 or 6 children are not really capable of sophisticated forms of manipulation.
- Kids are truly upset, fearful, angry or are experiencing whatever other feelings they are expressing.
- The quick shut-off to pleasant, cooperative, well-mannered behavior is a natural, protective defense.
“Think About” Homework

- Educators are invited to consider ways to distinguish between discipline and punishment.
- Educators are encouraged to consider the value of constructive discipline and discern the difference between disciplinary and punishing consequences.
- Educators are encouraged to consider ways to adapt the information presented in their classroom management skills.
Recommended Reading

- Websites: [www.stophitting.com](http://www.stophitting.com), [www.corpun.com](http://www.corpun.com), [www.neverhitachild.org/straus.html](http://www.neverhitachild.org/straus.html), and [www.nospank.net](http://www.nospank.net)